

Title: 'Feel Good': an evaluation of public health education for people with learning disabilities

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Background

The health of people with a learning disability is far worse than that of the general population. They face a number of health inequalities including poorer health and lower life expectancy. Good information and understanding of health is key to individuals being empowered to self-care and can prevent avoidable hospital admissions.

'Feel Good' is a new public health education programme devised by Purple Patch Arts for people with learning disabilities. Creative methods such as drama, dance, music and art were used to engage learners in nutrition, exercise and relaxation techniques. The aim of 'Feel Good' is to identify how accessible and effective health education can be delivered to people with learning disabilities. To do this, an evaluation was conducted by researchers at the University of Leeds.

Methods

Three questionnaires were developed including (i) pre-programme personal health survey, (ii) workshop evaluation survey and (iii) post-programme personal health survey. 31 participants were recruited to take part in the 'Feel Good' programme. The evaluation took place in two 'Fulfilling Lives Services' in Leeds, U.K during January to March 2016. As workshop participants had a range of learning disabilities, the survey could not be self-completed. Instead, a series of creative approaches were devised to collate the survey information.

Results

Participant rates in the workshops was high (81-100%) with 100% satisfaction reported throughout the programme. Overall, the use of a creative targeted intervention has improved health knowledge in participants. Post-programme, results showed a 16% increase in knowledge of annual health checks and a 23% increase in knowledge of relaxation techniques to self-manage 'feeling down'.

Conclusions

The 'Feel Good' programme has demonstrated that creative methods of teaching public health can foster positive change in health behaviours for people with learning disabilities which may reduce avoidable health complications.

Main messages:

- Targeted interventions for people with learning disabilities can empower self-care.
- Creative approaches can support understanding of complex subjects.